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THE TRANSFORMERS
SPOTLIGHT
OPTIMUS PRIME

He is the ultimate authority, the figurehead of an entire race. He stands for integrity, virtue and honor, his title representing a single-minded commitment to safeguard life and liberty throughout the universe. He stands apart, aloof, an island, encapsulating an ideal and an archetype. He understands he must be 'more' than his fellow CYBERTRONIANS, inviolate and incorruptible. But scratch the surface, and PRIME is just a mortal being, steel and sinew, as were those who came before…

THE TRANSFORMERS: SPOTLIGHT

OPTIMUS PRIME

WRITTEN BY: SIMON FURMAN

ART BY: DON FIGUEROA

COLORS BY: JOSH BURCHAM

COVER ART BY: DON FIGUEROA AND GABRIEL RODRIGUEZ

LETTERS BY: CHRIS MOWRY

EDITS BY: DAN TAYLOR

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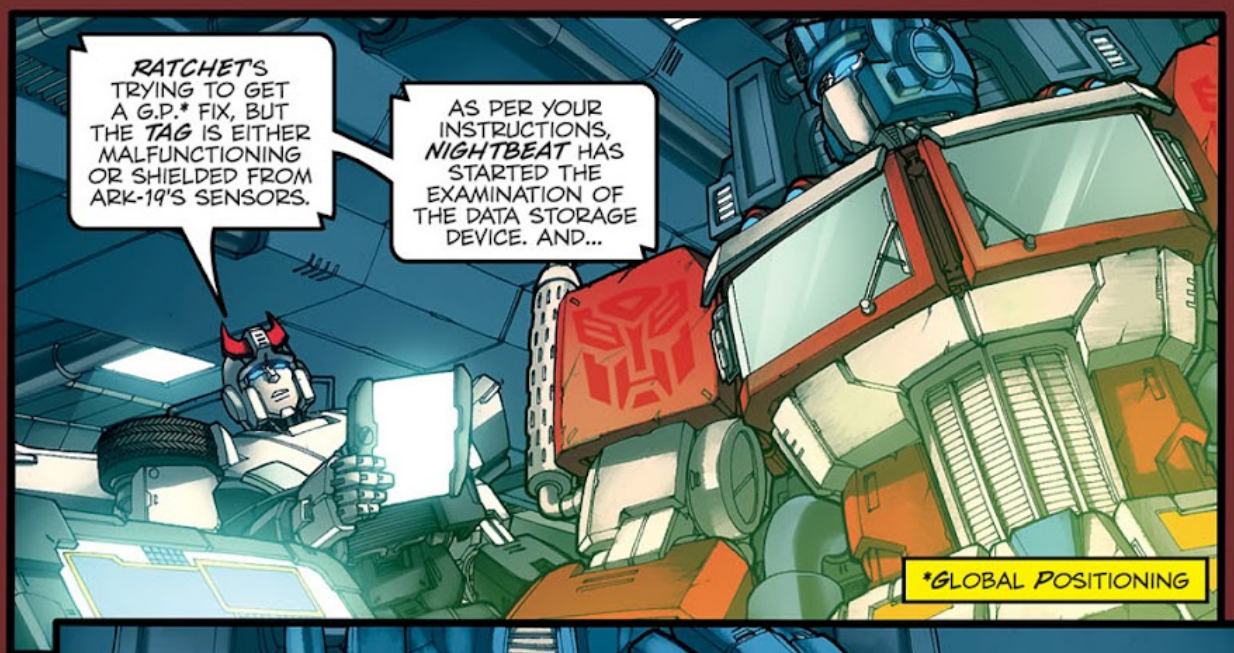
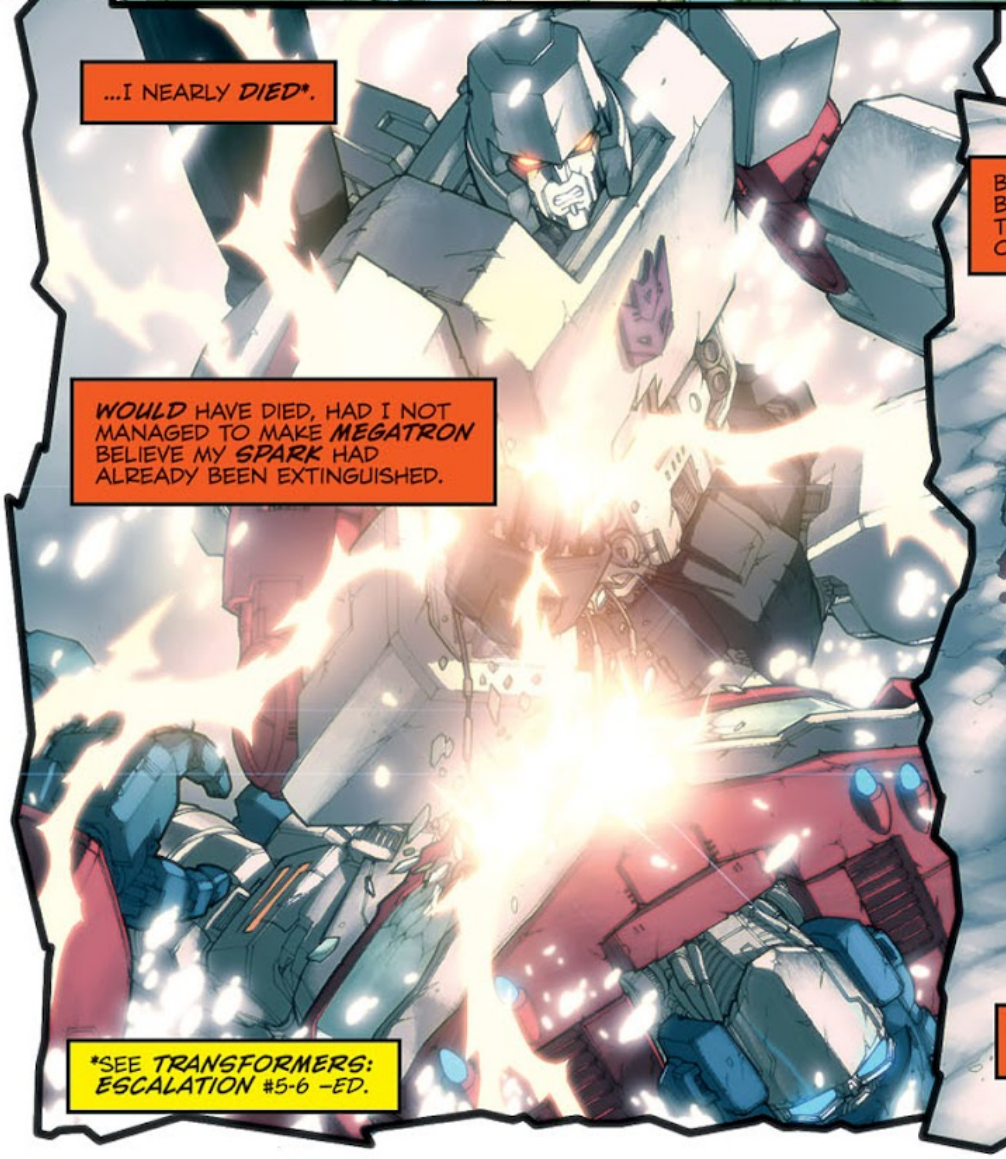
ARK-19 (EARTH):
THE VISIBLE WOUNDS HAVE HEALED, BUT SOME SCARS...
...RUN DEEPER.
...I HAVE ANOTHER LEAD ON SCORPONOK, ONE THAT I'M IN THE PROCESS OF FOLLOWING UP...
...PHYSICALLY, KUP'S BETTER, BUT THERE'S NO TELLING WHEN OR EVEN IF HE'LL BE MENTALLY FIT FOR ACTIVE DUTY...
...IT'S THIS WHOLE SUNSTREAKER THING. HE JUST WON'T LET IT DROP...
ARE YOU RECEIVING ME? ANYONE?
...HOT ROD'S BACK ON HIS FEET, BUT THERE'S STILL NO WORD ON IRONHIDE.
DEAD OR ALIVE, HE SEEMS TO HAVE DROPPED OFF THE FACE OF THE EARTH.

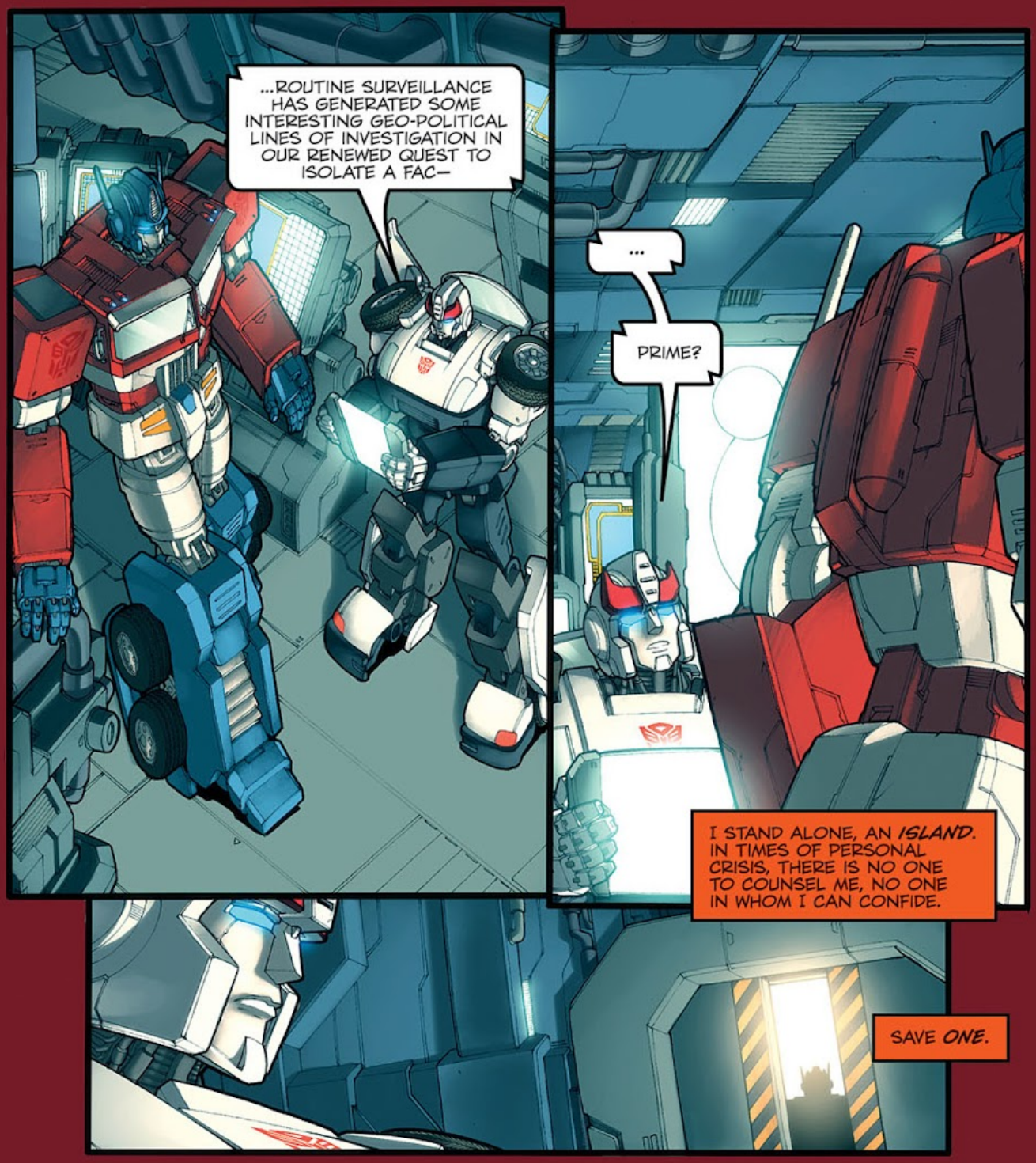

RATCHET'S TRYING TO GET A G.P.* FIX, BUT THE TAG IS EITHER MALFUNCTIONING OR SHIELDED FROM ARK-19'S SENSORS.
AS PER YOUR INSTRUCTIONS, NIGHTBEAT HAS STARTED THE EXAMINATION OF THE DATA STORAGE DEVICE. AND...
*GLOBAL POSITIONING

...THE HUMANS ARE SHOWING NO ILL-EFFECTS FROM THE GAS THAT RENDERED THEM...
IN BRASNYA...

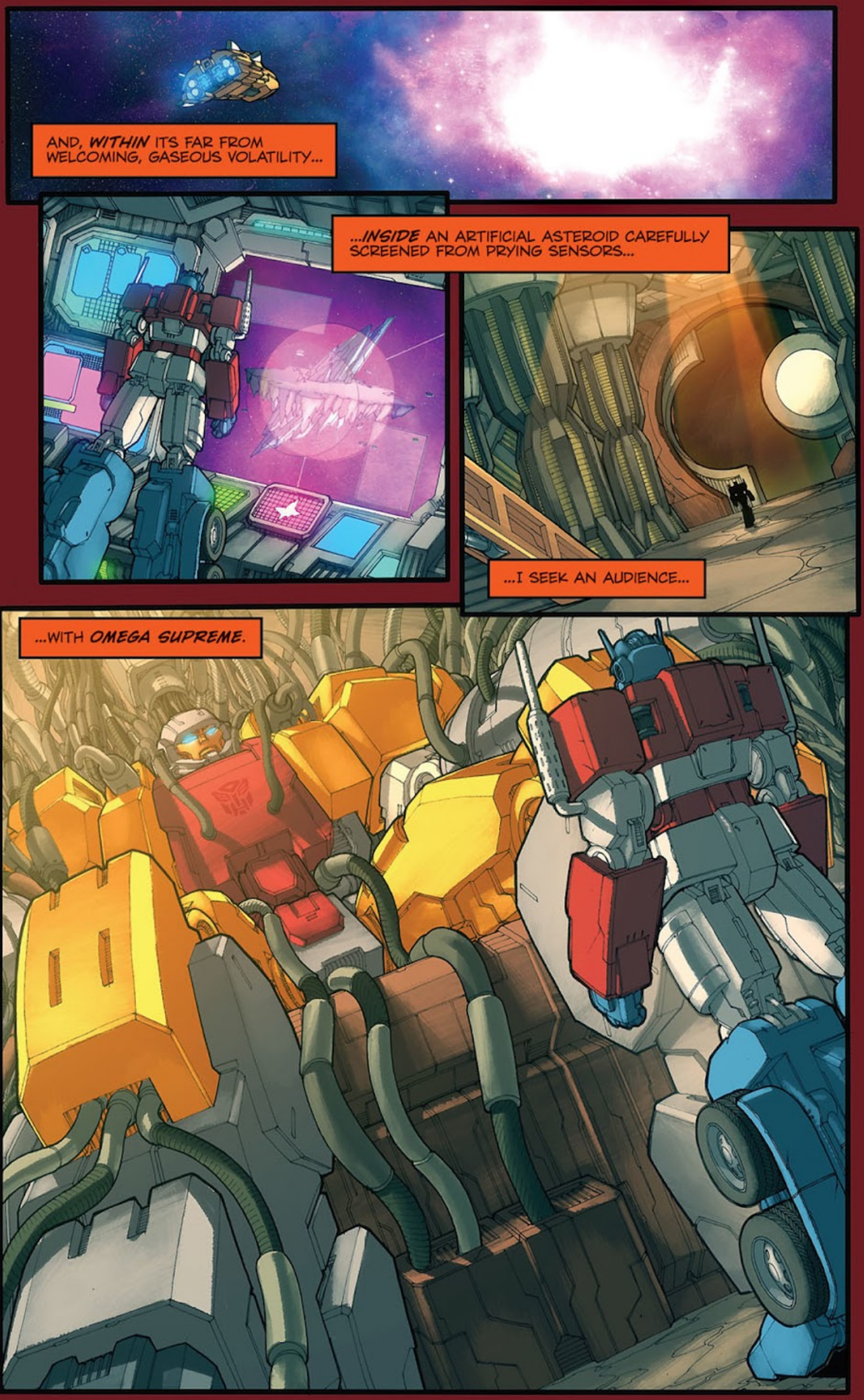

...I NEARLY DIED*.
WOULD HAVE DIED, HAD I NOT MANAGED TO MAKE MEGATRON BELIEVE MY SPARK HAD ALREADY BEEN EXTINGUISHED.
*SEE TRANSFORMERS: ESCALATION #5-6 –ED.

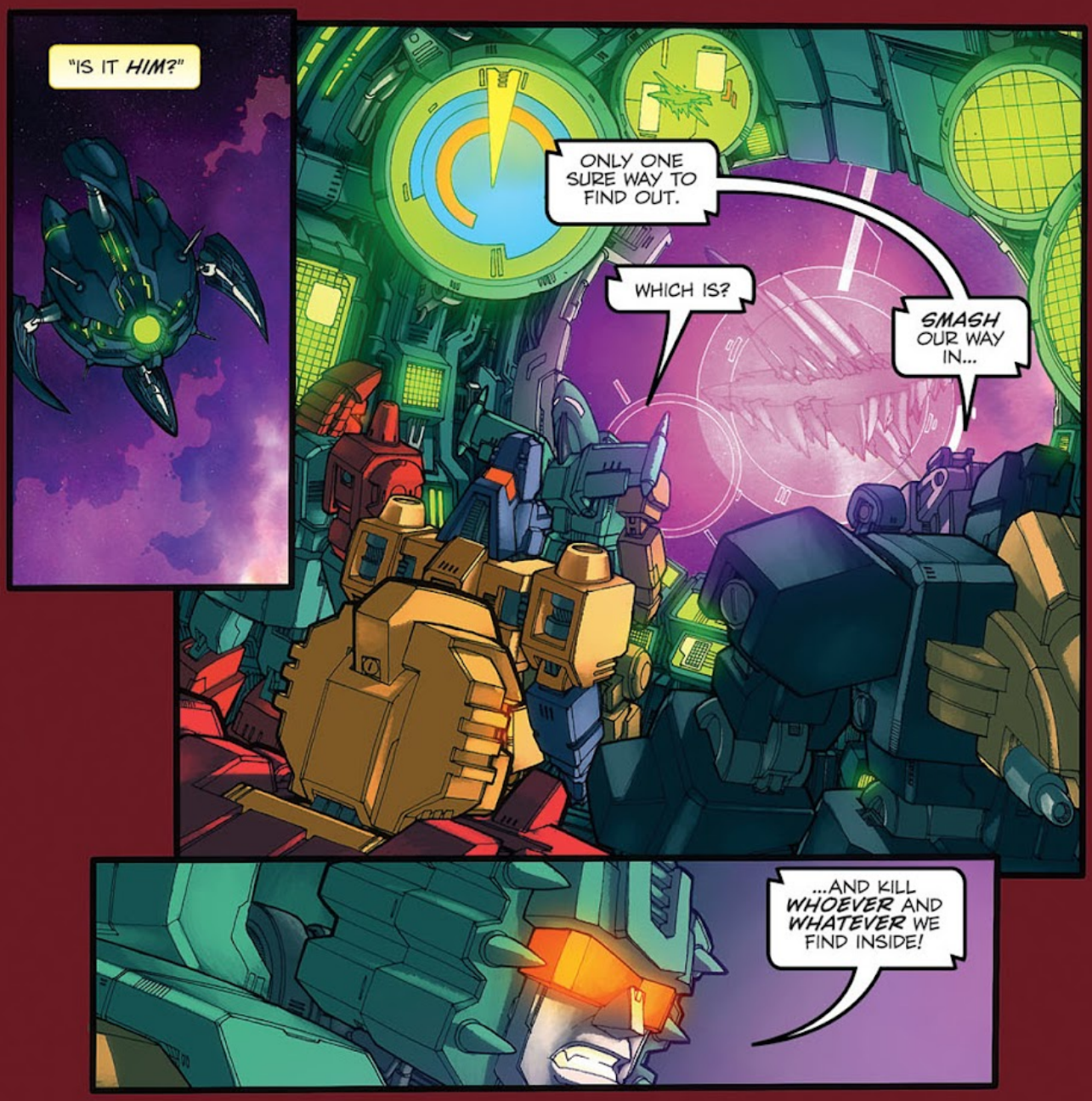
BUT IT IS NOT MY BRUSH WITH MORTALITY THAT WEIGHS HEAVILY ON MY MIND...
...IT IS WHAT I SENSED BEYOND.

IN MID-DOWNLOAD, IN THE VIRTUAL NOTHINGNESS WE CALL INFRASPACE, I SENSED A *PRESENCE*.
NOT JUST ANY PRESENCE. A LEGEND. A WHOLE ERA OF CYBERTRONIAN HISTORY PERSONIFIED.
A *PRIME*.
WE PRIMES REPRESENT THE *ENTIRE* CYBERTRONIAN RACE, STANDING INVIOLATE, INCORRUPTIBLE—A FIGUREHEAD.
WE ENCAPSULATE AN IDEAL, AN ARCHETYPE, A SINGLE-MINDED COMMITMENT TO SAFEGUARD LIFE AND LIBERTY THROUGHOUT THE UNIVERSE.
BUT *SCRATCH* THE SURFACE... AND WE ARE JUST METAL AND CYDRAULICS.

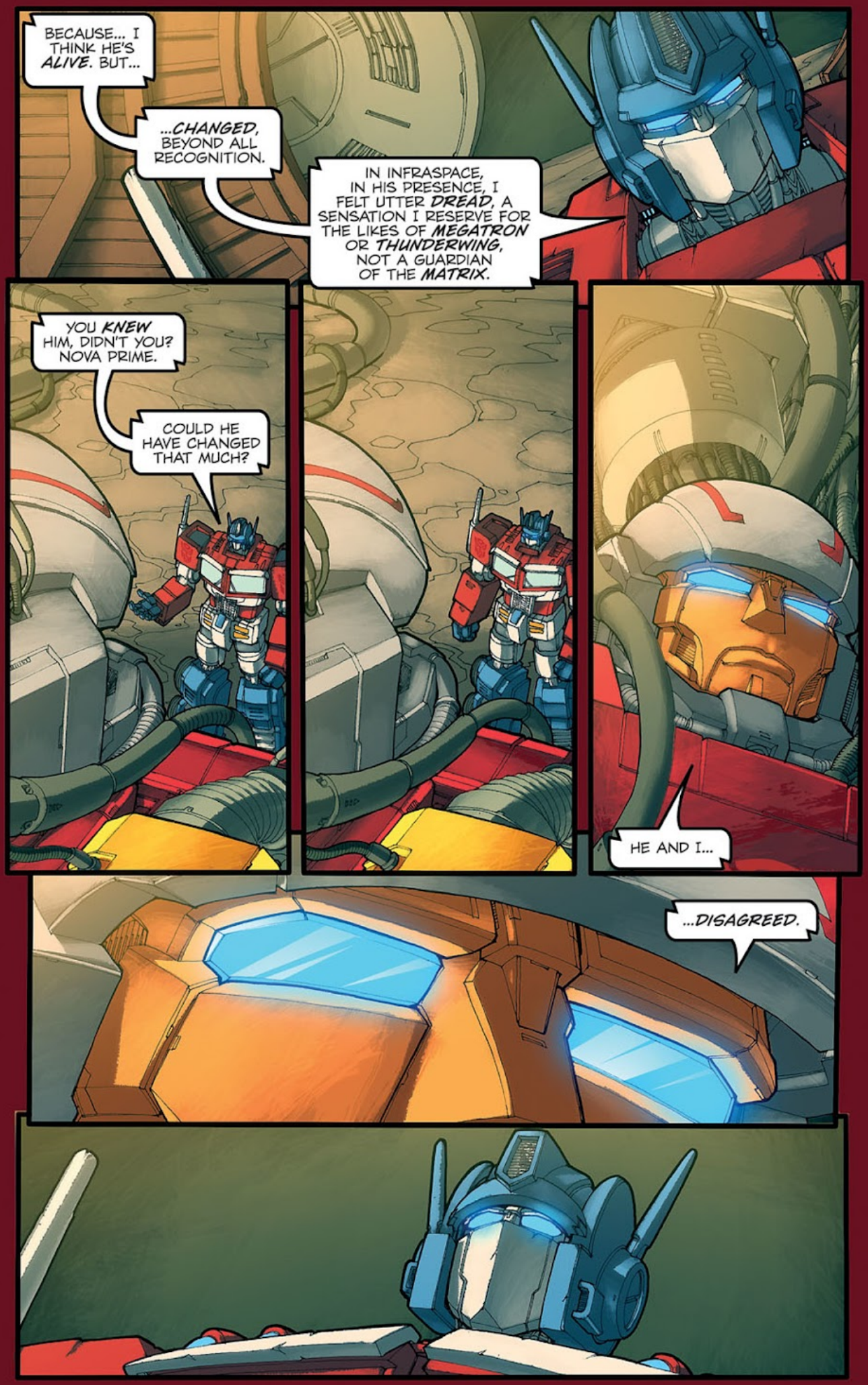

...ROUTINE SURVEILLANCE HAS GENERATED SOME INTERESTING GEO-POLITICAL LINES OF INVESTIGATION IN OUR RENEWED QUEST TO ISOLATE A FAC—
...
PRIME?
I STAND ALONE, AN *ISLAND*. IN TIMES OF PERSONAL CRISIS, THERE IS NO ONE TO COUNSEL ME, NO ONE IN WHOM I CAN CONFIDE.
SAVE *ONE*.

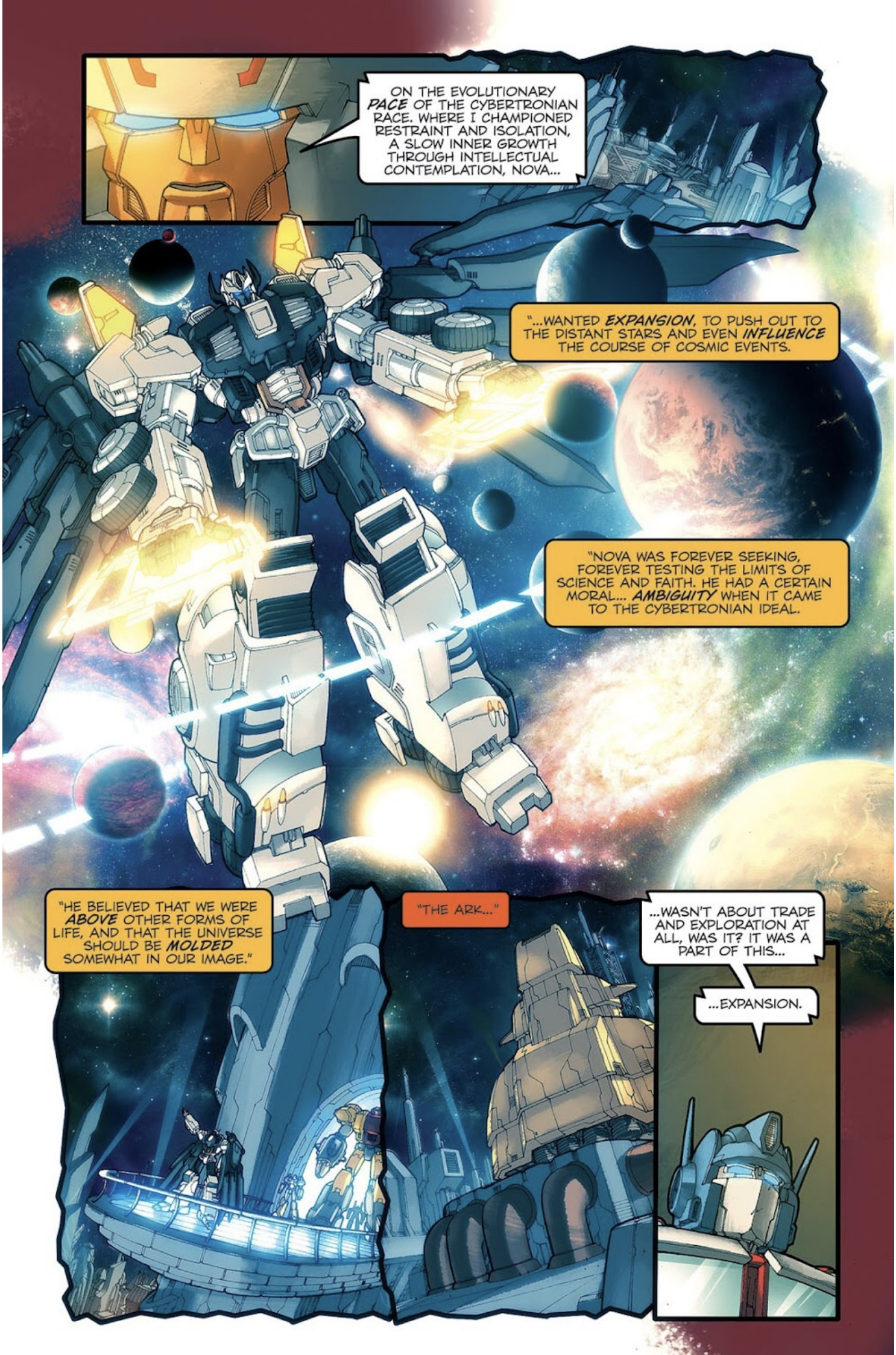
DESPITE VOCIFEROUS, IF DULY RESPECTFUL, PROTESTATIONS FROM *PROWL*, I TAKE *ARK-32*...
...AND SET COURSE FOR THE *MUTA-GAATH* NEBULA.

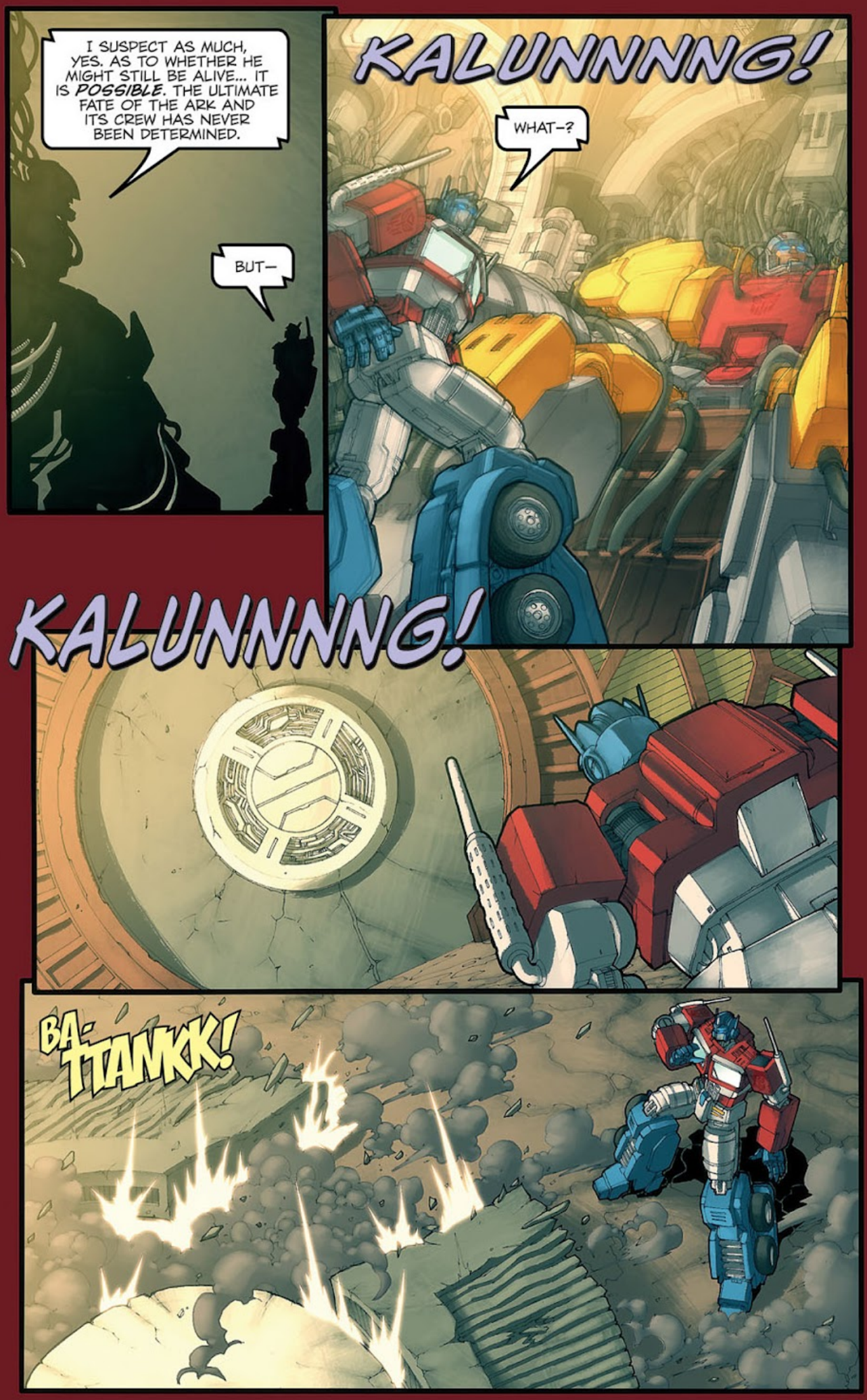

AND, WITHIN ITS FAR FROM WELCOMING, GASEOUS VOLATILITY...
...INSIDE AN ARTIFICIAL ASTEROID CAREFULLY SCREENED FROM PRYING SENSORS...
...I SEEK AN AUDIENCE...
...WITH OMEGA SUPREME.


"IS IT HIM?"
ONLY ONE SURE WAY TO FIND OUT.
WHICH IS?
SMASH OUR WAY IN...
...AND KILL WHOEVER AND WHATEVER WE FIND INSIDE!

SPEAK...
I BARELY KNOW WHERE TO BEGIN.
I SUPPOSE I NEED TO KNOW THE TRUTH ABOUT THE FIRST ARK... AND NOVA PRIME!
WHY?


BECAUSE... I THINK HE'S ALIVE. BUT...
...CHANGED, BEYOND ALL RECOGNITION.
IN INFRASPACE, IN HIS PRESENCE, I FELT UTTER DREAD, A SENSATION I RESERVE FOR THE LIKES OF MEGATRON OR THUNDERWING, NOT A GUARDIAN OF THE MATRIX.
YOU KNEW HIM, DIDN'T YOU? NOVA PRIME.
COULD HE HAVE CHANGED THAT MUCH?
HE AND I...
...DISAGREED.


ON THE EVOLUTIONARY *PACE* OF THE CYBERTRONIAN RACE. WHERE I CHAMPIONED RESTRAINT AND ISOLATION, A SLOW INNER GROWTH THROUGH INTELLECTUAL CONTEMPLATION, NOVA...
"...WANTED *EXPANSION*, TO PUSH OUT TO THE DISTANT STARS AND EVEN *INFLUENCE* THE COURSE OF COSMIC EVENTS.
"NOVA WAS FOREVER SEEKING, FOREVER TESTING THE LIMITS OF SCIENCE AND FAITH. HE HAD A CERTAIN MORAL... *AMBIGUITY* WHEN IT CAME TO THE CYBERTRONIAN IDEAL.
"HE BELIEVED THAT WE WERE *ABOVE* OTHER FORMS OF LIFE, AND THAT THE UNIVERSE SHOULD BE *MOLDED* SOMEWHAT IN OUR IMAGE."
"THE ARK..."
...WASN'T ABOUT TRADE AND EXPLORATION AT ALL, WAS IT? IT WAS A PART OF THIS...
...EXPANSION.


I SUSPECT AS MUCH, YES. AS TO WHETHER HE MIGHT STILL BE ALIVE... IT IS *POSSIBLE*. THE ULTIMATE FATE OF THE ARK AND ITS CREW HAS NEVER BEEN DETERMINED.
BUT—
KALUNNNNG!
WHAT—?
KALUNNNNG!
BA-TTANKK!

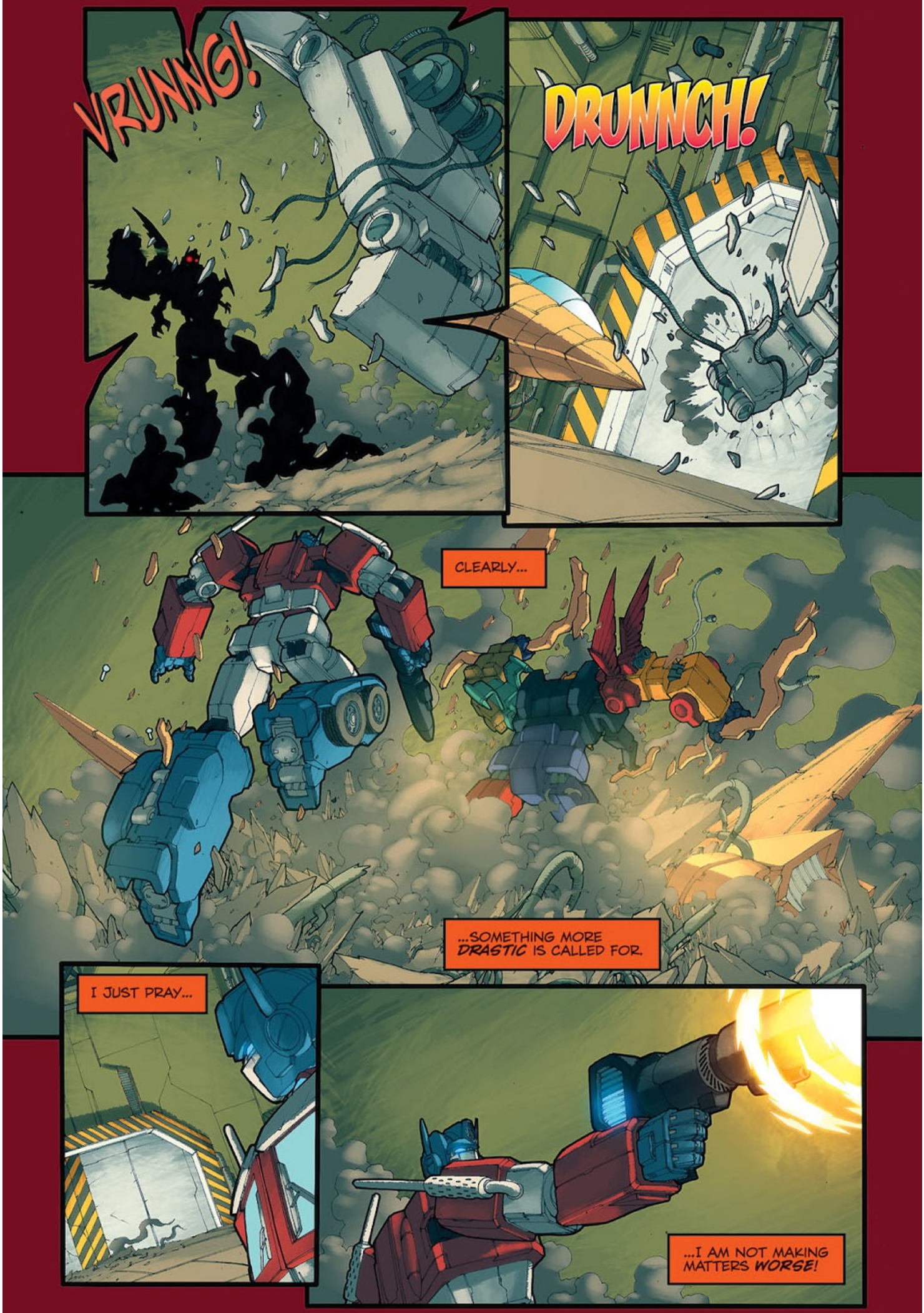
FOUND YOU. AT LAST! NOW YOU PAY!
GNRGHHH!
VRAAANK!
"WHAT IS IT?"

WHAT DOES IT WANT?
NOT "IT."
THEY.
AND THEY WANT...
...ME.
SKRUUUNK!
VARK!

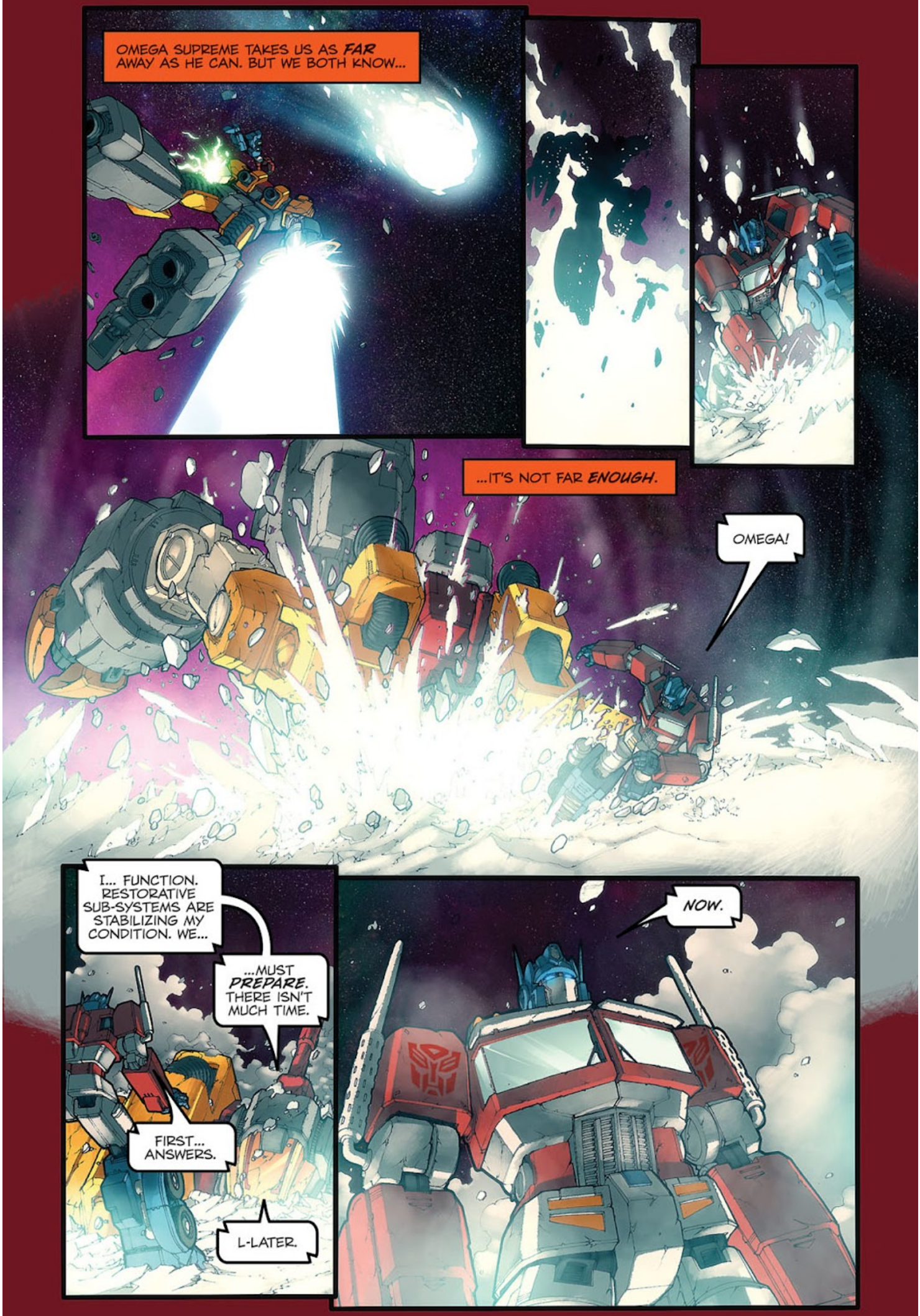
QUESTIONS... I HAVE SO MANY.
BUT THEY WILL HAVE TO WAIT.
THIS THING, WHATEVER IT—OR THEY—IS/ARE, HAS TO BE STOPPED.
SOMETHING OF A WEAPON OF LAST RESORT, OMEGA SUPREME WIELDS ENERGIES BEYOND MEASURE. BUT, AGAINST THIS CREATURE, EVEN UNQUANTIFIABLE...
...ISN'T ENOUGH!
ZRAKTT!

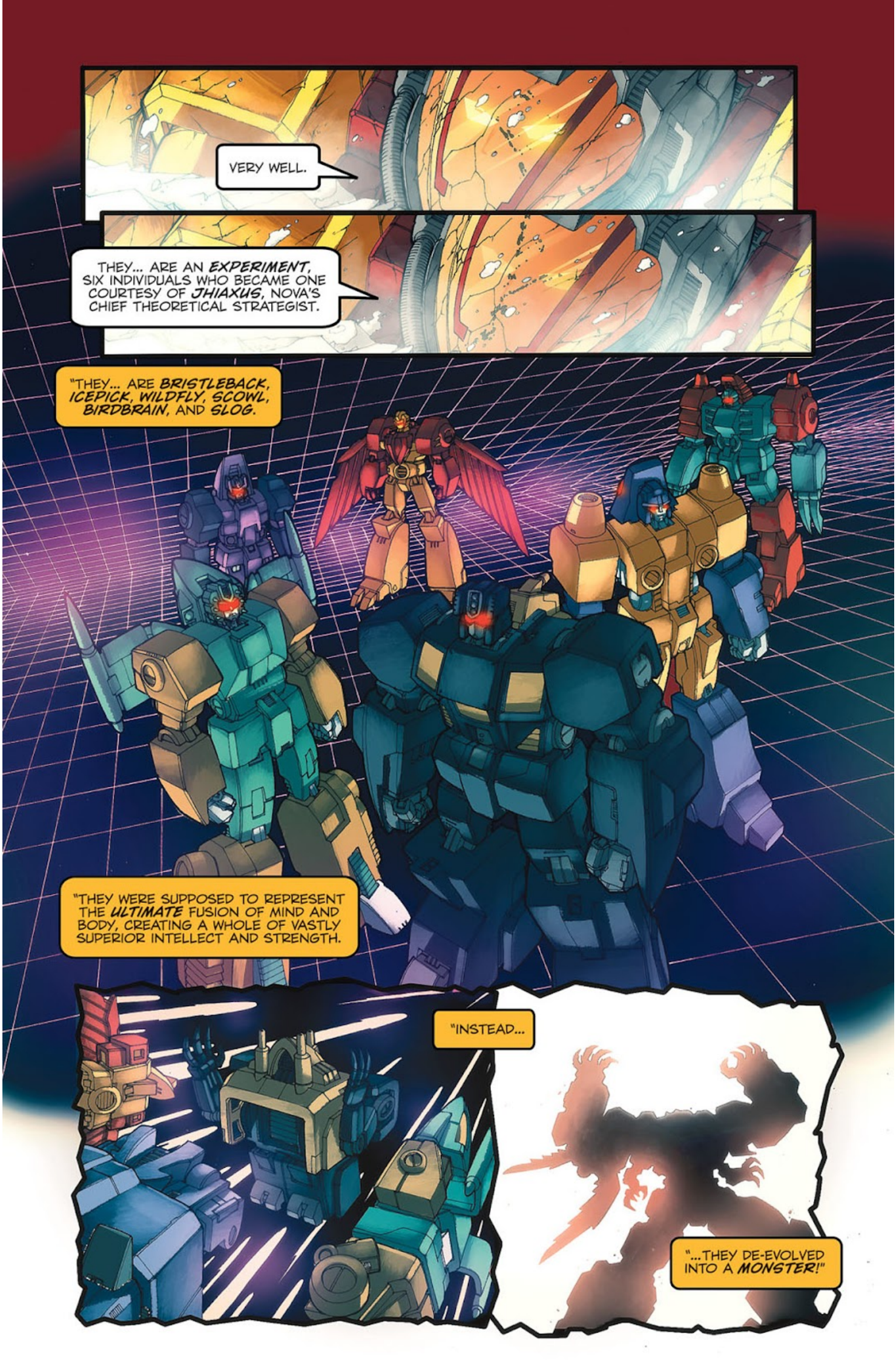
THASSHT!
MONSTRUCTOR...
...CRUSH!
KRUNNK!
IT WILL SURELY KILL HIM...
...UNLESS I DO SOMETHING!
LEAVE-
-HIM-

-BE!
ZOW!
TST!
THRAAAAM!
NOTHING. NOT EVEN A FLINCH. THE CREATURE POSSESSES SOME KIND OF ENERGY-DAMPENING FIELD.
SO...
ZZHTT!
...I TRY A MORE *INDIRECT* APPROACH!


VRUNNG!
DRUNNCH!
CLEARLY...
...SOMETHING MORE DRASTIC IS CALLED FOR.
I JUST PRAY...
...I AM NOT MAKING MATTERS WORSE!

I DETECT *MOVEMENT* ON THE PERIPHERY OF MY FIELD OF VISION...
...AND I UNDERSTAND THAT I HAVE ONLY BOUGHT US A *SCANT* RESPITE.


OMEGA SUPREME TAKES US AS FAR AWAY AS HE CAN. BUT WE BOTH KNOW...
...IT'S NOT FAR ENOUGH.
OMEGA!
I... FUNCTION. RESTORATIVE SUB-SYSTEMS ARE STABILIZING MY CONDITION. WE...
...MUST PREPARE. THERE ISN'T MUCH TIME.
FIRST... ANSWERS.
L-LATER.
NOW.


VERY WELL.
THEY... ARE AN EXPERIMENT, SIX INDIVIDUALS WHO BECAME ONE COURTESY OF JHIAXUS, NOVA'S CHIEF THEORETICAL STRATEGIST.
"THEY... ARE BRISTLEBACK, ICEPICK, WILDFLY, SCOWL, BIRDBRAIN, AND SLOG.
"THEY WERE SUPPOSED TO REPRESENT THE ULTIMATE FUSION OF MIND AND BODY, CREATING A WHOLE OF VASTLY SUPERIOR INTELLECT AND STRENGTH.
"INSTEAD...
"...THEY DE-EVOLVED INTO A MONSTER!"

WHEN NOVA PRIME—AND JHIAXUS—DISAPPEARED... I TOOK IT UPON MYSELF TO CONSIGN THEIR DEVIANT CREATION TO A DIMENSIONALLY DISPLACED PRISON...
...WHERE IT WOULD REMAIN FOR THE REST OF ITS UNNATURAL EXISTENCE.
YOU—
—YOU'RE NO BETTER THAN THEM!
ALL OF YOU... PLAYING GOD!
"PRIME, LISTEN CAREFULLY...
"...THE CREATURE HAS ONE WEAKNESS!"

A CONNECTIVE FILAMENT DIRECTLY BENEATH THE MID-TORSO ARMATURE. STRIKING IT WITH ENOUGH FORCE...
...WILL SEND IT INTO SPASM.
WAIT! MONSTRUCTOR—I ENTREAT YOU TO STOP! A GRIEVOUS WRONG HAS BEEN DONE TO YOU, AND I WILL DO EVERYTHING IN MY POWER TO HELP!
WE CAN—
—NNNN!
HELP US? IF YOU WANT TO HELP US...
...DIE QUICKLY.
AHAA... AT LEAST...

...I TRIED!
FLANNGG!
K-KRRRKK-
AK-
ONE WAY OR ANOTHER...
...YOU WILL BE HELPED.
I SWEAR IT.

EPILOGUE:

YOU'RE RISKING *EVERYTHING*, PRIME. IF THIS *GESTALT* TECHNOLOGY FALLS INTO THE HANDS OF THE DECEPTICONS...

...WE FACE *ARMAGEDDON*!

JETFIRE, DO WHAT YOU CAN FOR THEM. BUT...

...HANDLE WITH *EXTREME* CAUTION.

THE *PRIME LINEAGE* I SO CHERISHED...

...HAS PROVEN ITSELF TARNISHED, *CORRUPT*. THOSE I STROVE TO LIVE UP TO HAVE BEEN *TORN* FROM THEIR PEDESTALS.

THE VISIBLE SCARS WILL FADE, BUT I KNOW WITH DIRE CERTAINTY...

...OTHERS *NEVER* WILL.

THE END?